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## THE STUDY OF PRACTICAL LABOR PROBLEMS IN FRANCE.\*

THE difference between the study of practical and theoretical economics, the fact that one can thrive while the other is neglected, is strikingly demonstrated by the position now occupied by France as regards her contribution to economic science. France alone among the leading nations has within recent years made almost no addition to the literature of pure political economy. The new study of economic theory, for example, led by the Austrian professors Wieser and Böhm-Bawerk, with their researches concerning value, has there made little or no impression, scarcely eliciting a contribution to the economic press. In spite of this neglect of the theoretical aspect of economics, however, an activity in the study of practical labor problems there exists that is exceeded in no other country of Europe. Sweeping as this statement is, no one, I think, can make a careful examination of the work now being done in France without being convinced of its justification.

In America one is accustomed to associate all real study of labor conditions with the great universities. All of our economic reviews are connected with, and under the editorial management of, the economic faculties of the different universities; and contributions to their pages are largely drawn from men who follow academic careers. The results are such as might be expected. There is much excellent discussion of principles, some historical work regarding institutions; but little examination of actual labor problems with a view to devising means for their solution, and still less effort to put into practical

\*Read at the meeting of the American Economic Association at New Haven, Dec. 28, 1898.

operation the measures of reform deemed to be the most desirable.

In France the condition of affairs is the reverse. In scholastic instruction of economics France is notoriously weak. On the other hand, the study of social questions outside of the universities is pursued with great ardor, and is wide-spread. The real centres of education and work in this field are the important economic associations, and, more than all, the numerous organizations for the promotion of particular measures of reform the membership of which is drawn largely from men of affairs, those prominent in public life or in journalistic and business undertakings. Within recent years there have been organized in France a number of such associations, each devoted to the promotion of reform in a certain field, such as the improved housing of the working classes, the study of workingmen's insurance, the promotion of co-operation and profit-sharing. Their work has resulted not only in the accumulation of a great deal of information concerning these subjects, but in the practical introduction of the measures of reform for which they stand. In other words, these societies are not merely organizations for study alone, but are primarily societies of propaganda for the practical advancement of reforms which their studies have led them to believe to be desirable. In a number of cases the work of these organizations has assumed an international scope, and is of such excellence that no student of social conditions can afford to overlook it. Their publications in many instances constitute the most valuable body of literature in existence concerning the movements they represent.

It is the purpose of the present paper to make a rapid survey of these, as well as other agencies for the study of practical labor conditions, to show the valuable character of the work they are performing, and in general to give an idea of the character of the great movement for the

improvement of the conditions of labor that is now in full activity in France.

*Government Work.*—Though not the most important, the work of the government should first be considered. It is now generally accepted that the state has an important part to play in the collection and diffusion of information useful to mankind. In the case of information showing the social condition of the country this amounts to a real duty. All modern governments in their administrative reports and in their periodical census enumerations publish more or less information throwing light upon the industrial situation of the country, and consequently indirectly upon the economic condition of the laboring classes. Special effort on the part of the government systematically to collect information directly concerning labor conditions, however, is of recent date.

The first effort in this direction in France was in 1891, when M. Jules Roche, then Minister of Commerce and Industry, by decree of January 22 created a Superior Council of Labor with the duty of examining and reporting upon any measure relating to the interests of labor that might be referred to it. Its character was very similar to that of the Superior Council of Statistics created in 1885, which had been so instrumental in improving and unifying the statistical work of the various departments of the government. The labor council was made to consist of fifty members, partly representative workingmen, employers of labor, and members of Parliament appointed by the Minister of Commerce, and partly members *ex officio*, the chiefs of bureaus and officers of organizations having to do with the economic interests of the country.

This council has been very effective in promoting and elaborating the labor legislation of recent years. Almost its first service was to recommend and secure the creation of a permanent bureau of labor investigation in the exist-

ing *Office du Travail*, the purpose of which is strictly similar to that of our own Department of Labor. The law creating this bureau is dated July 20, 1891, and the decree determining the details of its organization August 19, 1891. Subsequent decrees of February 4, 1892, and June 13, 1894, have changed its nature and scope to some extent.

The French labor department has done exceptionally good work among labor bureaus. Its publications now number thirty-two or more volumes, in addition to a monthly *Bulletin* which has been issued since 1894, and constitute the most valuable body of information concerning labor conditions in France now in existence. Its annual reports concerning labor disturbances show the number, character, and results of strikes each year since 1890, and the results of the operation of the arbitration act since its enactment in 1892. Its special reports concerning the hygiene and security of industrial workers, and the arbitration of labor disputes both in France and foreign countries, are the most complete compilations upon these subjects that exist. Its series of reports upon the German and Austrian systems of workingmen's insurance present valuable analyses of the statistical returns of these institutions, and its reports upon wages and hours of labor in France furnish almost the only official data concerning these points that can be had.

As originally constituted, the work of the *Office du Travail* was limited strictly to the collection of labor statistics. Its facilities for statistical work, however, soon led to the transfer to it of other statistical work. It thus now publishes the results of the periodical censuses, the annual statistical abstract (*Annuaire Statistique*), and the *Statistique Annuelle*, or annual returns of births, deaths, marriages, which were formerly prepared by the independent *Bureau de la Statistique Générale*. The labor bureau has thus, in fact, become the central or general statistical office of France.

*Le Play School.*—Turning now to private efforts, historically, at least, the work of the Le Play School deserves prominent mention among the organized efforts for the study of labor conditions. In 1855 M. F. Le Play published his celebrated *Les Ouvriers Européens*. The Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, in according to this work the *Prix de Statistique*, expressed the hope that a society might be organized for the purpose of continuing the study of society along the lines, and according to the methods, there laid down. The idea was eagerly taken up by Le Play; and an organization under the name of *Société Internationale des Études Pratiques d'Économie Sociale* was effected November 27, 1856.

The work of this society and its celebrated founder is so well known as scarcely to require extended mention. The society is strictly an organization for original research. The characteristic feature of its work is that, pre-eminently among societies for economic investigation, it stands for the necessity of the direct observation of social facts and conditions. Its efforts are directed to the accumulation of documents embodying the results of observation. As regards the method of observation, however,—and herein consists the distinguishing tenet of the school,—it believes that the best results can be accomplished by the making of detailed monographic studies of the conditions of individual but typical workingmen in different industries and industrial centres. These studies are primarily the presentation of workingmen's budgets, similar to those published by the Department of Labor at Washington, but in addition are accompanied by detailed text descriptions of all the elements entering into the lives of the persons described, and the industrial centres in which they reside. A single budget, it is held, may not be of great value; but after hundreds of such monographs have been collected, representing all trades and localities, material is afforded for a comparative study of labor conditions and needs that can be obtained in no other way.

An essential feature of its work, therefore, is the effort to form or secure the co-operation of observers in all parts of the country, and even in foreign lands. For this purpose there have been organized numerous local centres of study called *Unions de la Paix Sociale*, and prizes are given for the best monographs submitted for publication.

As regards the methods of social reform, the Le Play School is a strong advocate of the *institution patronale*, or institutions organized by employers for the benefit of their employees, which have received so great a development in France. It also encourages in every way the association of workingmen for their mutual benefit, and believes that the state should interfere only in its regulatory capacity, as in the enactment of factory laws or indirectly to encourage individual and co-operative efforts.

This society has had an uninterrupted and successful history since its formation over forty-two years ago. Such men as Wolowski, Batbie, and Michel Chevalier have been its presidents. Its founder Le Play was its general secretary for twenty-six years, 1856 to 1882, since when M. Delaire has conducted its affairs with great zeal and success. The publications of the society now constitute a considerable library. The works of Le Play himself are numerous. The most important, *Les Ouvriers Européens* and *La Réforme Sociale en France*, are in six and three volumes respectively. A continuation of the former work has been published by the society under the title of *Les Ouvriers des Deux Mondes*. Since 1881 the society has published a bi-monthly review entitled *La Réforme Sociale*, which is now in its thirty-fifth volume.\*

Whatever the opinion held in regard to the method of

\* In 1887 some of the members of the society, differing with the others regarding the character of the monographs that should be sought, withdrew and formed a separate organization. A new periodical, *La Science Sociale*, was started as the official organ of this society. For a description of the reasons for this division, and the difference in the methods of the two organizations, see the article, *La Science Sociale*, by M. de Rousiers in the *Annals of the American Academy*, January, 1894.

observation advocated by this society, there can be no two opinions concerning the great value of the work done by it during its long history, not only in the accumulation of information concerning labor conditions, but in the great influence that it has exerted in awakening and promoting throughout France an interest in the study of the actual conditions under which labor is performed, and the particular features in which reform was most needed.

*The Musée Social.*—Though the youngest of all organizations for the study of practical labor questions in France, the *Musée Social* of Paris easily occupies the first place as regards the importance of the work performed. There is nothing quite like this institution in any other country. Endowed with adequate funds, it is devoted solely to the promotion of the study of labor problems and the advancement of concrete measures of labor reform. As regards its organization and purpose, it bears, in the field of economic research, a close analogy to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington in the domain of scientific investigation. Both were founded by private individuals "for the diffusion of knowledge among mankind." Both are non-scholastic in the sense of not having regular classes of students, and both maintain a corps of experts devoted to original research and to the aid of those making similar inquiries.

It is interesting to note how largely the various international expositions of France have served as the starting-point and direct cause of much of the social work now being done in that country. The *Musée Social*, in common with a number of the other important organizations for the study of labor problems, is the direct outcome of the success achieved by the Section of Social Economy organized in connection with the International Exposition at Paris in 1889. Through the efforts of this section there was assembled a vast quantity of documents of a unique value, relating to the conditions of labor and

workingmen's institutions. They represented the original sources of information, the constitutions and reports of workingmen's aid funds or unions, the exhibits of co-operative societies, plans and models of workingmen's houses, statistics of old-age and sick-pension funds, appliances for preventing accidents, which had never before been gathered together, and could be found in no library. It seemed a pity that a collection of such valuable material should be dispersed.

Impressed with this fact, and also with the great good that could be accomplished if the exhibit and work of the Social Economy Section could be made permanent and constantly added to, the Comte de Chambrun, by a generous donation, which he afterwards increased until the total amount given exceeds two million francs, created the *Musée Social*. Though the creation of the *Musée* was definitely determined upon and announced shortly after the close of the exposition, it was not formally inaugurated until March 25, 1895. In the mean time the plans for it constantly developed, until as now organized the *Musée* constitutes a veritable laboratory for economic research in all fields as far as they relate to concrete labor problems. In the language of its constitution, its object is "to place gratuitously at the disposition of the public documents, with collateral information, constitutions, plans, models, of institutions and undertakings having for their object and result the improvement of the moral and material situation of the laboring classes."

To carry out this aim, the *Musée* has spared no pains or expense in the organization of every possible means of obtaining information concerning labor and labor conditions in all lands, and in facilitating its use by all those interested in matters of social reform. It is magnificently installed in a building owned by it, 5 Rue Las Cases, where it has lecture-rooms, meeting-rooms for the economic and reform societies of Paris, exhibition rooms for

the display of plans, models, and accident-preventing appliances, and, most important of all, its carefully selected library. The latter now includes over 13,000 volumes exclusively devoted to labor, and consisting largely of original sources of information, reports and proceedings of societies, social undertakings, impossible to be found in ordinary libraries. Its files include records and copies of labor legislation in all countries, or of other important labor happenings, catalogued and under the direction of skilled librarians, whose duty it is to help investigators desiring to make use of it.

The *Musée* is not content with bringing together the results of others' efforts. Each year it sends one or more commissions to investigate particular features of the labor problem in foreign countries. It has thus made detailed investigations of trade-unions in Great Britain, labor organizations in the United States, co-operative and credit institutions in Italy, and the agrarian question in Germany, by special delegates sent to these countries. In addition to making these special inquiries, it maintains in foreign countries special correspondents, whose duties are to supply the *Musée* with copies of all bills, reports, or laws concerning labor matters presented in their countries, or of privately published works concerning labor, to furnish information as called for, and to transmit annual reports giving a résumé, with documents, of the labor events, legislation, and judicial decisions relating to labor during the year.

At Paris an important branch of its work is in its service for consultations. If a body of workingmen wish to form a trade-union, a co-operative society, or an organization of any kind; if an employer desires to create an old-age pension or accident insurance fund, or to introduce a scheme of profit-sharing; if it is a question of organizing a company for the construction of workingmen's homes; or if any social work is projected,— the *Musée Social*, when-

ever requested, co-operates in every possible way. Model constitutions are prepared, the necessary actuarial calculations made, plans of houses furnished, and expert criticism and advice given regarding any points submitted to it. This service is largely made use of. The *Musée* reports that during the six months ending April 1, 1898, such assistance was rendered in 547 cases, of which 240 were written communications, and 307 oral.

Finally, by means of special donations from the Comte de Chambrun, the *Musée* offers each year a prize of 25,000 francs for the best work submitted upon an assigned subject relating to labor. The first competition, that for 1897, was on the subject of Profit-sharing, the prize being divided among three competitors, who received 12,000, 8,000, and 5,000 francs respectively. The second competition, for 1898, on the subject of Workingmen's and Employers' Associations, was likewise divided among three contestants. The subject for the competition for 1899 is Workingmen's Insurance.

Though the publication of material is not the chief object of the *Musée*, its work in this direction is of constantly increasing importance. It now issues two series of monthly *circulaires*, or bulletins, of which over fifty numbers have appeared, each of which is devoted to a single subject. The reports of its special missions to foreign countries are published as separate volumes in a series entitled *Bibliothèque du Musée Social*.

It has not been an easy task to summarize in a few words the character of the work of an institution the activities of which are so multifarious and wide-reaching. The *Musée* has as yet but barely entered upon its work. It has succeeded, nevertheless, in drawing to it, either as officers or members of its consulting staff, all those most prominent in matters of social reform. Its rooms are the headquarters of many of the most important organizations for the improvement of labor conditions, and thus it has

become the centre for the study of labor problems and of active work for their solution in France.

*Société Française des Habitations à Bon Marché*.—From the consideration of organizations devoted to the general study of labor conditions we now turn to the examination of the work of societies having for their purpose the advancement of reform in some particular field. Among them, that of the French Workingmen's Homes Society claims our first attention.

As in the case of the *Musée Social*, the organization of this society is the direct consequence of the work of the Social Economy Section of the Paris Exposition of 1889. Its purpose is to provide an organization to perpetuate the work commenced by the International Congress in Relation to Workingmen's Homes, held under the latter's auspices; to provide a body which could take the initiative in the organization of subsequent congresses; to furnish the means for the uninterrupted study of the various phases of the problem of the housing of the working classes; and, finally, and most important of all, to form an organization of those most interested in the subject for the purpose of actively intervening and bringing about the creation of companies for the construction of working-men's houses throughout France, the enactment of necessary legislation regarding building and sanitary regulations, and the like. Though a society for study, it is none the less preëminently an organization for active propaganda.

The society was formally constituted December 17, 1889. Its field of operations as set forth in its constitution is "to encourage in all France the construction by individuals, employers, or local societies, healthy and cheap houses or the amelioration of existing buildings intended for the laboring classes. It will notably seek to make known the means necessary to facilitate to employees, artisans, and workingmen the acquisition of their own

homes. To accomplish this, it proposes to place at the disposal of individuals or societies, plans, model constitutions of recognized merit, as well as all other documents and necessary information."

It will be seen from this statement that the sphere of activity mapped out for itself by the society was that of a general bureau of information and centre of propaganda. Actual construction work, or even financial participation in building operations, is forbidden to it. Its means of action are to bring about the organization of independent building companies, gratuitously to furnish architectural plans, models of constitutions, and schemes of financial organization, to open competitive contests in which prizes are offered for the best plans for workingmen's houses, to furnish lecturers on the subject whenever any action is contemplated, and generally to assist in any other way for the advancement of the movement to which it is devoted.

This well-defined policy has been carried out with marked success. For ten years the society has labored unceasingly. From the first it drew to itself all those most competent to direct the movement for the improvement of the housing of the poorer classes. Its membership is largely composed of men actively interested in public affairs,—architects, government officials, directors of financial institutions. To a considerable extent the members are also directors of companies for the construction or renting of workingmen's houses, and are thus personally familiar with the details of the housing problem. During the decade these men have responded to scores of calls for addresses and personal help in the organization of work in different industrial centres. Hundreds of inquiries have been answered, and expert examination and report been made on plans and proposed schemes of organization submitted to it. Its quarterly *Bulletin*, issued regularly since its organization, now includes ten volumes of from four to five hundred pages each. Nor are these

pages devoted chiefly to addresses and academic discussion. For the most part they are devoted to the reproduction in full of the constitutions and reports of notable societies for the provision of workingmen's houses, with plans of houses and detailed statements of costs, and the financial results achieved. The files of the *Bulletin* thus constitute a storehouse of information presented in the most available way to which new companies or employers contemplating action can have recourse, not only for general information, but for that concerning the technical details, both architectural and financial, of the work with which they are concerned.

It is in its active promotion of the organization of companies for the building of workingmen's houses and the enactment of legislation, however, that its great usefulness has been manifested. Under its auspices and, as the direct result of its efforts, between twenty-five and thirty companies for the erection of homes for the working classes have been established, and are now in practical operation. When it began its work, co-operative effort on the part of the workingmen themselves to acquire their own homes was unknown. From the beginning of its operations it has been the persistent effort of the *Société Française* to introduce in France co-operative building associations after the English and American types. In this it has been successful. Such associations have been created through its efforts in various industrial centres, new ones are being organized every year, and through them the question of workingmen's houses is entering upon a new phase.

In the field of legislation the society has been equally successful. After an exhaustive examination of the character of the legislation that was desirable, it drew up a bill; and through its president, M. Jules Siegfried, who was also a member of the French Parliament, secured its enactment as the present important law of November 30,

1894. This law provides for the organization of local committees in each department to investigate housing conditions and promote action, and for the encouragement of the erection of small houses by the remission of certain taxes in their case; and finally permits the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations* and certain other public institutions to use a part of their funds in loans to companies or societies for building workingmen's houses. It has also secured a very important extension of this last privilege in the law of July 20, 1895, by which savings-banks are given the same power of so investing a part of their funds. In consequence of this law the savings-banks in various cities are actively participating in the work of housing the working classes through the financial aid granted to building societies of their localities.

The society itself at the present time is in a very flourishing condition. Its membership is divided into three classes: Donation, or those buying a life membership for 1,000 francs; Ordinary Life, or those buying a life membership at the regular rate of 800 francs; and subscription members, or those paying annual dues of 20 francs. The constitution of the society provides that all receipts from the first two classes must be carried to a permanent endowment fund, the capital of which cannot be alienated. As the society secured the adhesion of fourteen donation and thirty-three life members within less than a year from its organization, a number of the donation members giving more than the required 1,000 francs, it immediately started with a considerable endowment fund. In 1894 this fund received a great addition. The Comte de Chambrun, so well known as the founder of the *Musée Social*, gave the society the important sum of 50,000 francs. Shortly after, Madame Cornil, through M. Jules Simon, gave a further sum of 10,000 francs. Finally, an annual payment of 3,000 francs to the society was decreed by the government to be paid from the fund created by

the Giffard legacy. In consequence of these gifts the society, in 1898, possessed an endowment of over 100,000 francs in addition to the Giffard annuity, which at 3 per cent. represents a further capital of a like amount. The society is thus upon what would seem to be a perfectly secure basis. The enthusiasm of its officers and members in its work seems to have suffered no abatement in spite of the fact that it has now accomplished several of the most important purposes for which it was organized; and it will undoubtedly continue in the future, as it has been in the past, the centre of the movement throughout France for the improvement of the housing condition of the working classes and the increase of house ownership among them.

*Comité Permanent du Congrès International des Accidents du Travail et des Assurances Sociales.*—Closely analogous to the work of the Society for Workingmen's Homes is that of the Permanent Committee of the International Congress in Relation to Accidents to Labor and Workingmen's Insurance. The history of this organization, as regards its main features, is almost identical with that of the former society. Both took their rise from an International Congress held in connection with the Paris Exposition of 1889. This congress was probably the most important of the many social congresses that were held at Paris in that year. The German and Austrian governments had recently taken their radical action in regard to the compulsory indemnification of laborers for accidents, and the subject of accidents to labor was everywhere on the Continent receiving wide-spread attention. This congress succeeded in gathering together the officials of insurance institutions of all the countries of Europe; and the discussions that followed, with the publication of the reports that were presented, marked an epoch in the study of the question.

The advantages resulting from this comparative study

of a problem common to all the countries were so manifest that at the conclusion of the congress it was decided to effect a permanent organization. This was done by the election of a "Permanent Committee" with representatives from all the countries taking part in the congress, but with permanent headquarters at Paris. The appointment of this committee resulted in the organization of a strong society in fact, if not in name; for adherents whose dues would support the organization were sought, and were almost immediately obtained to the number of a thousand or more. The income derived in this way, in connection with various gifts, has enabled the committee to carry on its work in a most effective way.

From the start this committee took rank as the central bureau of information concerning all matters relating to accidents to labor and workingmen's insurance. One of its most important duties was to look after the organization of subsequent congresses and serve as the connecting link between them. This it has done in bringing about and managing the very successful congresses at Berne in 1891, Milan in 1894, and Brussels in 1897. Beginning with the year 1890 it has regularly published a quarterly *Bulletin* of from seventy-five to one hundred pages, in which are given not only studies of particular insurance questions, but the reproduction of all important legislation or official reports. The reports of the congresses and the files of the *Bulletin* at the present time constitute a library of thirteen large octavo volumes, and present the most valuable body of literature relating to the question of accidents to labor and workingmen's insurance that exists in any language. The congresses have uniformly been attended by the leading officials of insurance bureaus and companies, and it is difficult to overestimate the influence that they and the work of the *Comité Permanent* have exerted in diffusing information and bringing about right thinking upon the very complex problem with which they are concerned.

*Société pour l'Étude Pratique de la Participation du Personnel dans les Bénéfices.*—What the organizations that we have been considering are for the study and development of work relating to the housing of labor and workingmen's insurance, the Society for the Practical Study of Profit-sharing is for the investigation and advancement of the cause of co-operation and profit-sharing. This society, usually known under the shorter title of *Société pour la Participation aux Bénéfices*, is now in the twenty-first year of its existence, having been organized in the year 1878. The important feature of its work is that, though an organization for investigation and study, it is distinctly and avowedly a society of propaganda. Its membership is largely made up of officers of enterprises which are themselves practising profit-sharing. Its founder, president, and guiding spirit during the two decades of its history, M. Charles Robert, is the director of one of the most important insurance companies of France, and one which shares its profits with its employees. Its secretary, M. Albert Trombert, is the administrative head of the famous Chaix Printing House, likewise an important profit-sharing concern.

The principal means of action possible to the society has necessarily been that of education, the making known the extent to which the system of profit-sharing is practised, and the various forms under which it can be organized. Beginning with the year 1879, it has, therefore, published a quarterly *Bulletin* of about fifty pages, which is devoted to the description and critical examination of the most important examples of profit-sharing enterprises. In addition to this regular organ of the society, it has also undertaken or assisted in the publication of various other works relating to the question of profit-sharing. Chief among these must be mentioned the annual issue of the *Almanach de la Co-opération Française*, giving a list of profit-sharing concerns in France, the dates of their or-

ganization and certain other important facts concerning them; the translation by M. Albert Trombert of Dr. Victor Böhmert's classic work on profit-sharing; and two other works, also by M. Trombert, entitled *Guide Pratique pour l'Application de la Participation* and *Les Applications de la Participation aux Bénéfices*, which is intended as an appendix to Dr. Böhmert's work, giving an account of more recent profit-sharing enterprises.

This society has thus since its formation been the centre of all work and study in relation to profit-sharing and co-operation. At the present time it is apparently in a flourishing condition. It has an active though limited membership, and is now in possession of invested funds amounting to over 50,000 francs. Whatever one's opinion may be in regard to the advisability or practicability of profit-sharing schemes, there can be no divergence of opinion regarding the benefits that have resulted to economic science through the continued examination by this society of the results achieved under this system of industrial organization.

With the consideration of the work of this society we must close our account of the organized efforts now being made in France for the study of practical labor problems. As indicated by its title, the scope of this paper does not include a description of the general study of economics in France, but only that having to do directly with the examination and solution of what are called practical labor problems. No attempt is therefore made to describe the scholastic instruction of political economy or even the work of such organizations as the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, the *Société d'Économie Politique*, the *Société de Statistique de Paris*, interesting though their work may be. There still remain, however, a number of general points, characteristic of the work of all the organizations considered, that should be brought out.

They constitute, indeed, the most significant and interesting features of the whole movement.

First of all, it is important to seek the explanation for this wide-spread interest and activity in matters of labor reform. The Paris Exposition, through the great impetus given by its Section of Social Economy to the study of economic condition, marks the beginning of the movement; but some deeper reason for its success must be sought than in its inspiration.

This explanation can be found in the clear recognition on the part of the thinking classes of France of the significance of the growing movement towards socialism and state action on the Continent. The upper classes, or at least those who have the welfare of the people earnestly at heart, have become thoroughly aroused to the fact that something must be done to remedy existing hardships if the march of socialism is to be arrested. It is seen that this can only be accomplished by the practical demonstration that the condition of the laboring classes can be materially improved under the existing industrial system, and through the voluntary efforts of the people themselves. This, then, is the real reason, apart from the general desire to improve conditions, for the great efforts being made by employers of labor and public-spirited associations for the advancement of measures of labor reform. Though rarely so stating their object, the organizations that we have been considering are fighting the battle of individualism against socialism, of evolution against revolution. No better example of this could be given than the remarkable efforts which have been made within recent years for the development of workingmen's insurance institutions under private auspices in the hope of demonstrating that it is not necessary to resort to systems of state insurance similar to those of Germany and Austria. Large employers of labor all over France have created insurance funds for their employees; and the

national associations of iron and steel and textile mill owners, each including scores of firms, have organized at their own expense model organizations for the insurance of employees in those trades. It was undoubtedly due to the existence and work of these institutions that the compulsory compensation act recently passed did not also include some system of state or other form of compulsory insurance as well.

In line with these views it is important to note, as the second point to which it is desired to direct attention, that in the case of all the organizations described a resort to state action is strongly opposed. When legislation has been sought, it has been of a permissive character, its purpose being generally to give freer scope and encouragement to private action. This may be a surprise to some. We are accustomed to look upon the French as a people who resort easily to state action for the solution of stubborn social problems. Yet in no country is the demand for state action more stubbornly resisted. Certainly nowhere is there such a unanimity of opinion among economists and those interested in measures of social reform against such action. Not only is the spirit of individualism naturally very strong in France, but it is recognized by the intelligent classes that the French bureaucracy is not the effective instrument found in Great Britain and Germany, and probably could not be made so. So strong is this feeling in France that it is not rare to meet those who fully indorse Mr. Spencer's *Coming Slavery*, and are opposed to even the slightest factory regulations.

Finally, as the third point, we should observe the character of the men who make up the membership of these organizations for reform, or at least constitute their working force. To one who has had the good fortune to meet many of the men at the head of these societies, and to some extent become familiar with their work, no fact is more strikingly impressed upon him than that these men

are but in exceptional cases primarily teachers of economics. For the most part, they are men of affairs, actively engaged in industrial and official work. They are the directing heads of large manufacturing and commercial enterprises, insurance companies and banks, the chiefs of bureaus and departments of the government, the editors of newspapers and reviews.

Thus, as we have seen, the president of the society for profit-sharing, M. Charles Robert, is the manager of a large insurance company; and the secretary of the society, M. Trombert, is the head of an important publishing house. In the society for workingmen's homes the honorary president was formerly M. Jules Simon, and is now M. Jules Siegfried, who, like his predecessor, is an ex-cabinet minister and is now a member of the French Senate; the administrative president is M. Georges Picot, the permanent secretary of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences; the vice-president, M. Émile Cheysson, is the inspector-general of roads and bridges; and the general secretary, M. Fleury-Ravarin, is a member of the present Chamber of Deputies. At the head of the permanent committee of the congress in relation to accidents to labor and workingmen's insurance is M. Linder, the inspector-general of mines of France. The vice-presidents are MM. Darcy and Ricard, the former the president of the national organization of coal mine operators in France, and the latter a former cabinet minister and now in the Chamber of Deputies. The general secretary and active manager of the affairs of the committee, M. Gruner, is the secretary of the organization of coal mine operators above mentioned; and his assistant, M. Bellom, is an engineer in the state corps of mines.

It would be possible thus to run through the list of the active members of all of these organizations, and show to how large an extent they are directly associated in some way with enterprises which bring them in actual touch

with the conditions which they are seeking to ameliorate. It is hardly necessary to comment upon the significance of this feature of the work we are considering. Whatever may be her failings in other respects, France has succeeded in securing the active interest and assistance of her best business men in measures of labor reform; and the movements with which they are identified are making rapid progress. Could the United States obtain a similar co-operation, the reproach that economists are mere theorists would pass away, and the cause of industrial reform would take a great step forward.

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